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STATUS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Written statement submitted by North-South XXI, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[11 March 1998]

GE.98-10994 (E)

Status of international human rights instruments

1. Where human rights are concerned, certain great powers have proclaimed themselves the universal guardians and promoters of civil and political rights. Although they are parties to most of the conflicts at the core of the process of globalization, they set themselves up as judge and jury alike, demonstrating profound disregard for international law.

2. It must be stressed that the United Nations international human rights instruments under which monitoring bodies have been created (the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of the Child) have been ratified by a huge number of States. Only 19 States are not a party to any of the instruments just mentioned. With the exception of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United States of America is not a party to any of the main international human rights instruments. Of course, the signing and ratification of these conventions are no guarantee that States will truly respect human rights. However, the bodies responsible for monitoring their implementation are able to exercise some degree of follow-up and to provide information on the behaviour of States parties.

3. The combination of disregard for instruments whose aim is to establish an international order where there is greater respect for human rights, and of bias against the monitoring bodies established by the international community necessitates a call to order from the competent United Nations bodies, in particular for the world's leading power. There is also a need for systematic worldwide dissemination of information on the status of the international human rights instruments.